

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1676

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 757

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO, US

SUBJ: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES

REF: (A) STATE 26803; (B) LISBON 653

1. PURSUANT INSTRUCTIONS REFTEL SPENT OVER AN HOUR THIS EVENING (FEB. 7) WITH PRIME MINISTER VASCO GONCALVES. INITIAL RECEPTION WAS EXTREMELY STIFF. DEPARTED, HOWEVER, ON RELATIVELY GOOD TERMS. WE THEN HAD JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH VASCO GONCALVES EMPHASIZED HIS ATTENTION TO DEAL WITH ME REGULARLY ON AN OPEN AND FRANK BASIS. HE ALSO REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S STRONG POSITION IN SUPPORT OF NATO EXERCISES.

2. GIVEN INITIAL COOLNESS I RAISED AID ISSUES FIRST, EXPLAINED THAT OUR CONGRESS WAS IN PROCESS OF VOTING FUNDS AND THAT WE NEEDED TO MOVE AHEAD RAPIDLY ON CONCRETE PROJECTS. GONCALVES SEEMED INFORMED ON OUR ACTIVITIES AND PROVIDED ME WITH A LIST OF QUESTIONS WHICH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY GIVEN AMBASSADOR SCOTT (I HAD NEVER SEEN IT), TO WHICH I AGREED TO RESPOND. IN TERMS OF U.S. GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT, HE SAID, DOLS 25 MILLION WAS SMALL BUT HE UNDERSTOOD IT AS A SYMBOLIC GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP, WHICH HE WELCOMED.

3. THEN TOLD VASCO GONCALVES I HAD INSTRUCTIONS FROM MY GOVERNMENT TO EXPRESS TO HIM OUR DEEP CONCERN WITH THE RECENT TREND OF EVENTS IN PORTUGAL. WE UNDERSTOOD AND SUPPORTED GOP'S DETERMINATION TO INSTALL DEMOCRACY, AND OUR AID WAS A

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DEMONSTRATION OF THIS SUPPORT. WE ALSO GREATLY APPRECIATED

STRONG STAND GOP HAD TAKEN ON NATO EXERCISE. BUT HE DECISION ON LABOR LEGISLATION, THE OPORTO EVENTS, THE STORIES ON THE SOVIET FISHING FLEET AND STATEMENTS BY CERTAIN MILITARY LEADERS CALLING INTO QUESTION WHETHER THE ELECTION RESULTS WOULD BE RESPECTED HAD GIVEN RISE TO OUR DEEP CONCERN. THE U.S. DID NOT WISH TO SEE A TREND OF EVENTS IN PORTUGAL THAT WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF AN OLD AND VALUED PARTNER. AT THIS POINT VASCON GONCALVES SAID HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEANT. I SAID TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT THE LEFTIST DRIFT OF RECENT WEEKS. THIS KIND OF TREND COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ON OUR PART. IF PORTUGAL WAS TO RETURN TO DEMOCRACY IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE IN A FREE ATMOSPHERE AND THAT THE RESULTS OF THESE ELECTIONS BE RESPECTED.

4. VASCO GONCALVES SAID U.S. MUST UNDERSTAND THE GEOGRAPHIC POSITION OF PORTUGAL. "WE ARE PART OF EUROPE AND WE DO NOT INTEND TO GO TO THE OTHER SIDE." PORTUGAL WOULD "RESPECT ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS," BUT IT ALSO HAD A RIGHT TO CHOOSE ITS OWN DESTINY. THE VASCIST GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN A PROBLEM FOR THE U.S. BECAUSE OF THE AFRICAN WAR. WE HAD TO STRADDLE THE FENCE. BY LIBERATING THE AFRICAN TERRITORIES THE GOP HAD PROVIDED A BASIS FOR STRENGTHENING ITS FRIENDSHIP WITH U.S. AT SAME TIME PORTUGAL HAD RIGHT TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, JUST AS THE U.S. HAD RELATIONS WITH THESE COUNTRIES.

5. EVIDENCE OF PORTUGAL'S DETERMINATION TO REMAIN PART OF EUROPE AND TO HONOR ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS WAS THE STRONG POSITION THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF HAD TAKEN WITH REGARD TO NATO EXERCISE "LOCKED GATE". GOP UNDERSTOOD THAT AGITATORS WERE TRYING TO PROVOKE INCIDENTS AND WAS TAKING CONSIDERABLE RISKS IN LETTING EXERCISE GO FORWARD. BUT IT WAS DETERMINED TO DEMONSTRATE ITS COMMITMENT TO NATO. ALL ANTI-NATO DEMONSTRATIONS WILL BE DEALT WITH FIRMLY. AT THIS POINT HE ASKED ME IF I WAS AWARE THAT A DEMONSTRATION WAS SCHEDULED AT THIS VERY HOUR IN FRONT OF AMERICAN EMBASSY. I WOULD SEE WHEN I RETURNED THE FIRMNESS WITH WHICH GOP INTENDED TO HONOR ITS OBLIGATIONS AND TO PROTECT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. (I RETURNED TO FIND 20 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS

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PARKED IN FRONT OF EMBASSY AND A PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE HELICOPTER HOVERING OVERHEAD.)

6. AS FOR LABOR LEGISLATION. GONCALVES SAID, "THAT IS AN INTERNAL MATTER." HE REPEATED THIS AT LEAST THREE TIMES DURING THE CONVERSATION. PORTUGAL WAS MOVING TOWARD DEMOCRACY, AND STRONG LABOR UNIONS WERE ANECESSARY ELEMENT. AFTER ALL DIDN'T THE U.S. HAVE STRONG LABOR UNIONS AND WEREN'T THEY ALL

TIED TOGETHER (I CORRECTED HIM ON THIS LATTER POINT). THE ELECTIONS FOR UNION REPRESENTATION WOULD BE FREE. AS I KNEW, OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES DID NOT HAVE A SINGLE LABOR UNION DECREED BY LAW. GOP HAD DONE THIS BECAUSE IT DID NOT WANT INDIVIDUAL LABOR UNIONS TO BECOME ALIGNED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY. ONCE AGAIN WE HAD TO UNDERSTAND THAT THESE WERE TRANSITIONAL MEASURES TAKEN BY A COUNTRY THAT HAD LIVED UNDER YEARS OF DICTATORSHIP. HAVE YOU IN THE U.S. EVER LIVED IN A DICTATORSHIP, HE ASKED RHETORICALLY.

7. AS FAR AS OPORTO INCIDENT WAS CONCERNED, GOP HAS UNDER-ESTIMATED THE SITUATION. IT HAS LEARNED A LESSON AND WOULD NOT AGAIN SKIMP ON SECURITY MEASURES, AS I WOULD SEE WHEN I RETURNED TO THE EMBASSY. BUT, HE SAID, AFTER ALL NO ONE WAS KILLED. "WE ARE A PEACEFUL PEOPLE, THE MOST PEACEFUL PEOPLE IN EUROPE." EVEN YOU IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE VIOLENCE. AFTER ALL WEREN'T PRESIDENT KENNEDY, ROBERT KENNEDY AND MARTIN LUTHER KING ASSASSINATED.

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8. STORY ON SOVIET FISHING FLEET, HE SAID, WAS A COMPLETE FABRICATION OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, AN AMERICAN NEWS ORGANIZATION. AS AMERICAN AMBASSADOR I SHOULD CALL IN ASSOCIATED PRESS AND FIND OUT FOR MYSELF. (I THOUGHT OF TELLING HIM OF MY CONVERSATION WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR, BUT DECIDED NOT TO AT FIRST MEETING). HE AGAIN REPEATED THESIS THAT PORTUGAL WAS PART OF EUROPE AND DID NOT INTEND TO LEAVE IT. BUT IT DID HAVE A RIGHT TO DETERMINE ITS OWN DESTINY AND TO HAVE RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES. I TOLD HIM THIS WAS NOT AT ISSUE AND WASN'T OUR CONCERN.

9. AS FOR ELECTIONS, GONCALVES SAID VARIOUS GROUPS WERE DISSEMINATING RUMORS THAT ELECTIONS WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE. THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECLARED ITSELF FORMALLY ON THIS ISSUE AND INTENDED TO MOVE AHEAD AS ANNOUNCED. CIVIL WAR WAS NOT A POSSIBILITY SINCE THIS REQUIRED DISSENSION WITHIN THE ARMY, WHICH DID NOT EXIST. IT IS TRUE THAT FAR-LEFT EXTREMISTS WERE CAUSING PROBLEMS, BUT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DEAL WITH THEM.

10. VASCO GONCALVES THEN ASKED THAT I LOOK AT EVENTS AS AN EXPERIENCED DIPLOMAT AND A PRACTICAL AMERICAN. HE HAD GROWN TO KNOW THE AMERICANS WHEN HE SERVED AT THE LAJES AIR FORCE BASE AND KNEW WE WERE A PRACTICAL PEOPLE. WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION. BUT HE KNEW WHAT WAS REALLY BOTHERING US, IT WAS THAT THE GOP HAD A COMMUNIST IN ITS GOVERNMENT. "YOU AMERICANS ARE BLIND WHEN IT COMES TO THE SUBJECT

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OF A COMMUNIST IN THE GOVERNMENT. BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DOES NOT DEAL WITH INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND SUBJECT LIKE NATO. THOSE SUBJECTS ARE HANDLED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES." HE ONCE AGAIN DROVE HOME THE POINT THAT GOP WAS FIRM IN ITS COMMITMENT TO NATO, AND HAS TAKEN CONSIDERABLE RISK IN ALLOWING "LOCKED GATE" EXERCISE TO GO FORWARD. I TOLD HIM WE WERE VERY MUCH AWARE OF THIS AND APPRECIATED IT.

11. COMMENT: THIS WAS MY FIRST CONTACT WITH VASCO GONCALVES. AS ANTICIPATED, I FOUND HIM ANIMATED. BUT I DID NOT FIND HIM UNBALANCED. HE IS AN INTELLIGENT AND PERSUASIVE MAN, WHO CAN BE VERY FORCEFUL, BUT WHO CAN ALSO BE DIFFICULT.

12. BOTH OF US MADE STRONG STATEMENTS DURING CONVERSATION, HE ASKING US IN EFFECT TO BE MORE OBJECTIVE AND TO STEER CLEAR OF INTERNAL MATTERS, AND ME SAYING WASHINGTON CONCERN WAS BASED ON TREND, NOT ISOLATED INCIDENTS. SOME OF HIS STATEMENTS WERE EITHER DISINGENIOUS OR NAIVE, BUT HE HAD A STRONG POINT IN GOP'S COMMITMENT TO NATO EXERCISE, TO WHICH HE RETURNED REPEATEDLY. HE ALSO RETURNED TO REALIZATION THAT PORTUGAL IS PART OF EUROPE AND DID NOT INTEND TO LEAVE IT.

13. I ALSO HAD A SENSE THAT GONCALVES WAS ON TOP OF EVENTS, AND THAT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER WE WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH HIM. HE CERTAINLY IS A VERY DIFFERENT PERSONALITY THAN COSTA GOMES.
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